

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
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Hudson County Bar Owner Pleads Guilty to
Role in International Human Smuggling Ring

(More)

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TRENTON – A Hudson County bar owner, pleaded guilty today to harboring illegal aliens, in connection with a human smuggling ring that brought young Honduran women into the U.S. and required them to work off smuggling debts that ranged from \$10,000 to \$20,000, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Luisa Medrano, 51, of Cliffside Park, entered guilty pleas to two counts of harboring. She also pleaded guilty to one count of tax evasion.

Medrano faces a probable sentencing range of between 24 and 30 months in federal prison under the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines when she is sentenced by U.S. District Judge Joel A. Pisano. Judge Pisano has wide discretion in imposing sentence and can sentence within the range or above or below the range. Judge Pisano scheduled sentencing for Dec. 26.

As part of the plea agreement, Medrano agreed to make full restitution for all losses to the victims of her offense. Medrano also must pay back taxes of approximately \$250,000 and has agreed to forfeit two parcels of real property she owns where illegal aliens were harbored: 75 68th Street in Guttenberg, and 2604 New York Avenue, Union City, New Jersey 07087. The two properties are valued in excess of \$500,000.

Medrano admitted today that, from at least as early as October 2004, and continuing until at least as late as January 2005, in Hudson County and elsewhere, she harbored and employed young Honduran females, who were recruited from Honduras, illegally smuggled into the United States, and who were required to work in various bars owned by Medrano in Hudson County.

The women worked six days a week from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. for \$240 per week plus tips at three bars owned by Medrano – El Paisano Bar, located in Union City, Puerto de La Union I and Puerto de La Union II (collectively “the bars”). The women – including at least four juveniles who obtained false identification – would get the male patrons to buy beers for themselves and the women. The women would also dance with the patrons at a cost of \$3 per dance.

In earlier pleas before Judge Pisano, Noris Elvira Rosales Martinez, Ana Luz Rosales Martinez, and Jose Dimas Magana admitted that once the women arrived in the New York/New Jersey area, they would pick up the women and bring them to one of three apartments owned by Medrano located at 2604 New York Avenue, Union City; 509 22nd Street, Union City; and 75 68th Street, Guttenberg (collectively “the apartments”), where the women were required by the Rosales sisters and Magana to live at the apartments until their smuggling debts were repaid.

(Per the plea agreement, Medrano will forfeit the apartments located at 75 68th Street in

Guttenberg, and 2604 New York Ave. in Union City.)

Medrano also pleaded guilty to attempting to evade federal income tax in connection with her 2001, 2002 and 2003 individual tax returns.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Ronald D. Wigler, Camelia M. Valdes and Deborah J. Gannett of the U.S. Attorney's Office in New Jersey, Newark Office.

This case is the result of an investigation conducted by agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Newark, under Special Agent in Charge Kyle Hutchins; and the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Inspector General Gordon S. Heddell, the Guttenberg Police Department, under the direction of Public Safety Director Nicholas Lordo; ICE Honduras Attache Roberto Alvarez; ICE Investigator Alba R. Mejia, the General Prosecutor of the Republic of Honduras, and the Special Investigation Police in Honduras.

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Defense Counsel:
Gerald L. Shargel, Esq.
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